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# Hilltopics: Volume 3, Issue 20

Hilltopics Staff

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# HILLTOPICS

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**Be Heard:** *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions on virtually any topic. Email your ideas, feedback, or articles to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com).

### **Like Money?**

*Hilltopics* is sponsoring an essay contest, and we're offering over \$1,000 in prizes. More info on page 3.

## Are politics polluting the global warming debate?

by Kyle Snyder

The recent hysteria created by new studies on global warming and Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" has led many, including myself, to question the impact of their personal lives on the environment. While I will not take this opportunity to deny that the earth's climate may be getting warmer, I question the broader role that the global warming movement will have in our lives. Beyond the issues that deal purely with respecting our environment, this movement has become a political agenda that seeks to broaden the scope of government at the expense of personal freedom, and for that reason I will not subscribe to any of it.

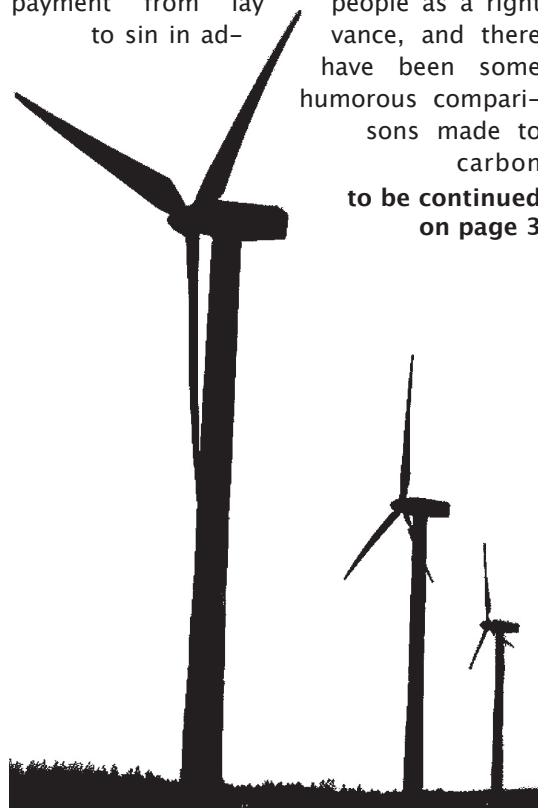
From a personal perspective, I am very much in favor of reducing pollution and encouraging individuals to take responsibility for sound environmental stewardship. I make every effort to conserve electricity at home, I recycle whenever possible, and though it isn't a hybrid, my Honda Accord is among the most fuel-efficient vehicles on the road today. Looking at the situation from a broader perspective, the universally accepted truth is that the greater a nation's wealth, the more likely that nation's government will be to enact environmentally friendly policies and regulations. America's enormous industrial power and financial wealth have allowed us to do just that. Even though we may be heavy consumers of natural resources, we enjoy clean air and clean water not found in developing nations such as China and India. In fact, China's carbon emissions will surpass those of the United States if their current rates of economic growth continue. While the Kyoto Protocol is not the central focus of this article, those who criticize the United States for not signing on to this agreement fail to recognize that these developing industrial nations will be exempt from its regulations.

People the world over need energy like we need food, clothing, shelter, and oxygen. We cannot ignore energy as one of our basic needs, nor can we deny the role that fossil

fuel energy has played in bringing the greatest amount of prosperity to the greatest possible number of people. While we must continue to develop new sources of energy for the future, we also must be mindful of our present energy demands, most of which come from fossil fuels. The transition away from fossil fuel energy will certainly not be an easy one, so governments should be planning to make this transition as smooth as possible rather than worry about a vague climate catastrophe.

What Al Gore and those who subscribe to his agenda will have everyone believe is that the apocalypse is upon us unless we grind the world's factories and industrial production to a halt. He and his followers will then retreat to their "eco-friendly" mansions and continue to consume large amounts of electricity (presumably neutralized by carbon offsets) while the rest of us will be left to fend for ourselves. Centuries ago, some churches used to accept payment from lay people as a right to sin in advance, and there have been some humorous comparisons made to carbon

to be continued  
on page 3



## Online encyclopedia wars: A ridiculous response to the "bias" of Wikipedia

by Douglas Hill

Let's play a game. I'll give you two quotes, each from a different online, user-created encyclopedia, and you tell me which sounds like it was written by someone more interested in politics than fact.

From the "Scopes Trial" entry:

Quote 1: "The trial in 1925 of John Scopes for teaching evolution in Tennessee was a defeat of Darwinism. The ACLU and liberal trial lawyer Clarence Darrow brought the Scopes case in the hopes of winning a public relations and legal victory, but in fact William Jennings Bryan, the evangelical Christian who had been Secretary of State in the Wilson Administration, decisively beat them."

Quote 2: "The Scopes Trial (*Scopes v. State*, 152 Tenn. 424, 278 S.W. 57 (Tenn. 1925), often called the Scopes Monkey Trial) pitted lawyers

William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow against each other (the latter representing teacher John Thomas Scopes) in an American legal case that tested a law passed on March 13, 1925, which forbade the teaching, in any state-funded educational establishment in Tennessee, of 'any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.' This is often interpreted as meaning that the law forbade the teaching of any aspect of the theory of evolution."

I shouldn't have to tell you that the more biased quote appears to be Quote 1. This is just one example, but it demonstrates what's wrong with "*Conservapedia*" ([www.conservapedia.com](http://www.conservapedia.com)). This new, unabashedly right-wing, open-source encyclopedia is designed to compete with *Wikipedia*, the popular site which the creators of *Conservapedia* consider laden with "confirmed incidents of liberal bias."

This has to be a joke, right? *Wikipedia* is, as its name suggests, a wiki site, meaning that it allows its users to edit, create, or delete content. *Wikipedia's* definition of "user" is broad: it means every single person who uses it, which is roughly a zillion people a day. If *Wikipedia* is both popularly created and biased, that seems to imply that the radical brand of conservatism espoused by the *Conservapedia* is unpopular, rather than that there is some vast left-wing internet conspiracy trying to misinform the public by acknowledging things like "evolution is science."

It has long been a practice of conservatives with unpopu-

lar ideas to accuse any and every media outlet that disagrees with them of liberal bias, so *Conservapedia* isn't really a novel idea. What is so troubling about it is the way it tries to blend ideology with factual statement. Instead of saying "Christians believe Jesus redeemed humanity of sin by sacrificing his life," *Conservapedia* states the miracle of crucifixion and resurrection as fact: "Jesus voluntarily accepted his fate and delivered over his spirit on the cross for our sins." Later in the "Jesus Christ" article the author writes: "Many of the descriptions in the Gospels have been proven true with modern archaeology." The only example given, however, is archaeological evidence of the existence of Pontius Pilate, the Roman who allowed Jesus to be killed.

Furthermore, the entire notion of *Conservapedia* is inherently hypocritical. If *Wikipedia* is liberal propaganda presented as if it were fact, the solution is not to create conservative propaganda and present it as fact.

The authors and founders of the *Conservapedia* simply have their hearts in the wrong place. The point of online encyclopedias is to create an easily accessible, reasonably accurate, and relatively comprehensive database of human knowledge. The point of the *Conservapedia* is to promote political and religious ideology. Surely any-

one can see that creating an ostensibly informative website is a wrong-headed and misleading way of promoting such an ideology. Political views are, obviously, opinions; to masquerade them as fact is dishonest and ineffective.

There is no doubt that *Wikipedia* should be taken with a grain of salt. Anyone, from Stephen Hawking to Bam Margera, can edit it, and hardly any articles are free of errors. Do people with radical views sometimes vandalize the *Wikipedia* with slander and even downright propaganda? Yes. Are facts sometimes omitted or deleted because users find them offensive or politically incorrect? Certainly. But *Wikipedia* is honest. Everyone knows it's not an academic source, and one would be a fool to accept it as the final word on anything.

Gee, it sure would be nice if *Wikipedia* allowed users who find certain content objectionable or inaccurate to edit that content. Oh, wait...they do. If you don't like *Wikipedia*, edit it.

*Douglas Hill is a senior international studies major.*





## Global warming hysteria may be misguided, and over-reaction can be costly

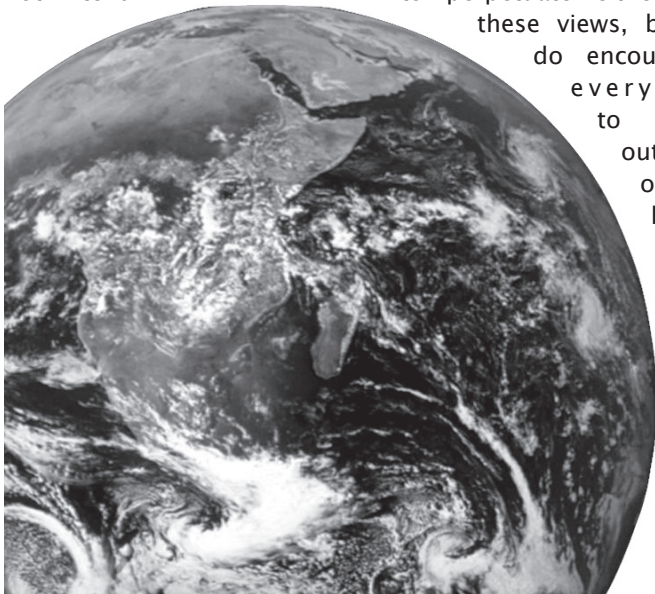
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offsets for today's environmental movement.

While politics and environmental issues have long been intertwined, Gore has turned this movement into a purely political agenda seeking to undermine the freedom of nations and individuals to make their own decisions at the expense of more worldwide bureaucratic central planning. Mr. Gore, communism has failed already. There's no reason to bring it back. Only by growing technology and wealth, not restricting it, can we improve our relationship with the environment while continuing to create global economic prosperity.

If you've read this far and you are one of those who falls in lock-step with the global warming movement, you've probably already called me a "climate change denier," or wondered how many members of my family work for Exxon Mobil. I do not intend

to perpetuate either of these views, but I do encourage everyone to step outside of the box



when thinking about where the global warming debate may lead us. Sure, the earth may be getting warmer, but who was the last person you talked to who said they looked forward to subzero temperatures in winter? If people in more tropical climates have to apply a few extra layers of sunscreen, their loss will be Minnesota's gain.

*Kyle Snyder is a senior finance and political science major.*

## Why it's important to not split an infinitive

*by Clare Taylor*

You see them everywhere—split infinitives are in textbooks, newspapers, magazines, books, and in the headline of this article. In case you are unaware or need a refresher, a split infinitive occurs when the infinitive (for example: "to walk") is separated by some other part of speech. In one of my classes recently, my professor devoted an entire class period to a writing practicum in which he asserted that split infinitives no longer constituted a grave grammatical error, especially in comparison with use of the passive voice and the comma splice.

I would beg to differ. The infinitive functions as one single unit of meaning. Splitting an infinitive is like eating cookies without milk, you just shouldn't eat one without the other. When I come across a split infinitive in print, it is the equivalent to nails scratching on a chalkboard. Immediately I find something seems wrong in the sentence, and I have to fix the sentence in my mind before I can continue reading. For that brief second, the stars seem out of alignment, and the world is about to end.

Admittedly, by writing this article I am inviting you to scrutinize my writing for all use of the passive voice, incorrect comma usage, and good sentence structure. You'll probably find a lot that a professor would mark off for (like not ending a sentence with a preposition?). I don't claim to be a grammar purist; I'm just passionately outspoken in my dislike of split infinitives. I acknowledge my beliefs are not widespread, especially since the Facebook group entitled "A kitten dies everytime you split an infinitive" has only 40 members (and yes, this is a global group). Even with this lack of support, split infinitives are none the less an important problem plaguing many people's prose today.

However, thinking about my professor's grammar counsel in regards to the correct use of the infinitive, perhaps the split infinitive is no longer the grammatical faux pas that it once was. In fact, language is a living thing, which changes as our society evolves. Nonetheless, as language and culture continue to progress, I argue for a reunion between the "to" and the "be" of the infinitive "to be." After all, as my professor so wisely quipped, would that famous line from Hamlet be the same if it were "To be or to not be, that is the question?"

*Clare Taylor is senior French and international studies major.*

## HILLTOPICS

**First Annual Campus Essay Contest**

**Win \$750 for 750 words!**

This spring, *Hilltopics* is sponsoring its first annual essay campus essay contest, and you're invited to participate for your chance at \$1,000 in prizes. Turn your 600 to 750 word essay in before 5:00 on April 13 at Clements Hall room 108.

**Prompt:** SMU is well known for its vibrant Greek life and party culture and less well known for its academic excellence and "life of the mind." What, if anything, should SMU do to change this perception?

This is your chance to speak out and get paid for it!

*Essays should be double-spaced, 12 point font and should include a title page with name, email address, telephone number, and ID number.*

*Questions? Contact Todd Baty (tbaty@smu.edu)*

## Good diversity: reevaluating the the role of ethnicity in today's society

by Pat McDonald

This article is a response to the on going dialogue about diversity featured in recent issues of *Hilltopics* and the *Mustang Post*.

After months of non-controversial and non-confrontational material, *Hilltopics* seems to have received a breath of fresh air in the form of a debate on diversity. I would like to offer my take on this topic.

*Ethnicity becomes attribute in the ideal society.* Diversity, as it is usually understood, is ethnic. To justify this point seems unnecessary considering that the applied diversity effort par excellence, affirmative action, is an effort to promote ethnic diversity. To be sure, measures have been taken to prevent all forms of discrimination that compromise the inalienable rights of Americans. But the attribute that has stirred the most fervor, destroyed the most lives, and causes the greatest number of other forms of discrimination---economic, religious, and so on---is ethnicity. This is not to say ethnic discrimination is the most common form---it may be---but only that it is the most pressing. It is this pressure that has led us to look towards a society where such differences are overlooked except as a matter of anthropological fascination. That is, ethnicity ought to be valued insofar as it is correlated with differences we see as interesting and harmless, on par with, say, occupation. It is a society of respectful pluralism that avoids the dangers of relativism. Let us call it our ideal society.

*Organizations promoting the ideal society must incorporate aptness criteria.* As a result, organizations that are geared towards or have a membership primarily composed of one ethnic group ought to be on par with those that are geared towards or have a membership primarily composed of one occupational group. The NAACP, then, is not any more morally objectionable than the American Society of Civil Engineering. One is simply appropriate for a group, not "good enough" for it---eligibility refers solely to one's ability and desire to do the work in a group and not to any valuation of personhood. Even if an organization is geared towards or has a membership primarily composed of both an ethnicity and an occupation, such as the Society of Hispanic Engineers, it is ability and desire to fulfill a goal that is prized, as a white

Engineer could join. In fact, even if only Hispanic engineers could join, this would be fair if being a Hispanic Engineer could be shown to best serve the groups interests, as perhaps they would resonate better with the organization's audience. This has no implications concerning the inalienable rights of a person; it simply means one's abilities are best invested in some places than others.

*But such organizations are only good insofar as they are necessary.* Unless organizations geared towards or have a membership primarily composed of one ethnic group serve to promote the ideal society, said organizations are unnecessary. Here is where statistics come into play. If the aforementioned type of group is aimed at or is primarily composed of ethnic groups that are a majority, then they will only hinder the expression of similar groups aimed at and primarily composed of ethnic groups that are a minority. Thus, an Association of White Engineers is most likely unnecessary.

Also, a group aimed at or primarily composed of ethnic groups that are a minority can become a bastion of ethnic resentment and consequent elitism, and so hinder the fruition of our ideal society, albeit on a smaller scale. It is quite easy for such groups to pass under the PC-radar, as our county is primarily on guard against bigotry from whites. It is up to us, then, to ascertain which organizations are to be retained and which are to be dissolved.

*Pat McDonald is a junior anthropology major.*



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